
MARRIAGE IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

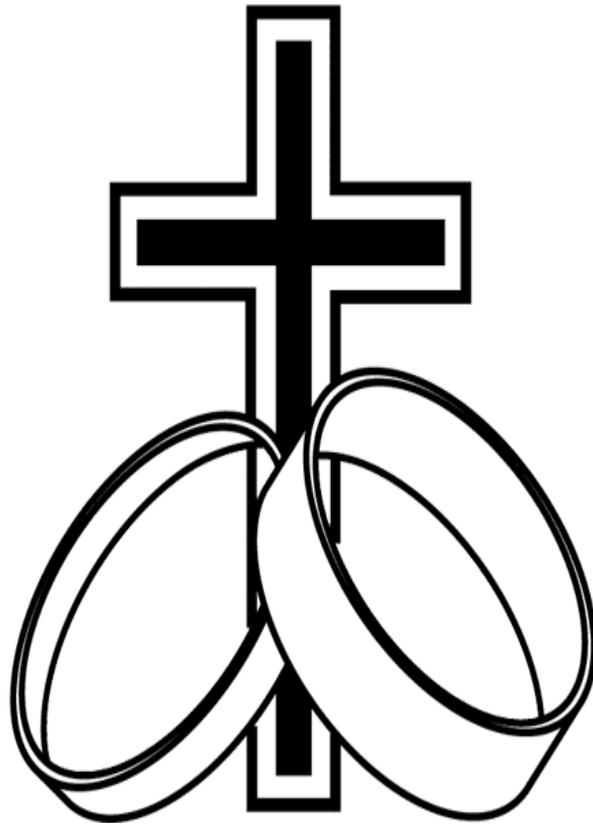


"The Two Shall Become One"

ST. JOSEPH PARISH
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As a worshipping community, we at St. Joseph, your friends and neighbours, congratulate you for having chosen to consecrate your love for one another in the Sacrament of Matrimony. We want your marriage to be as successful and rewarding as possible and offer these guidelines to assist you as you prepare to take this important step in your lives.

INTRODUCTION & GENERAL INFORMATION

THE ESSENCE OF MARRIAGE

Marriage is a covenant by which one man and one woman establish between themselves a partnership of the whole of life, which is directed to the good of the spouses and to the nurturing of children. This union was designed by God, who has willed by it to give husband and wife a share in the greatest work of creation, namely the continuation and education of the human race. Marriage is of its very nature a holy institution, requiring of those who enter into it a complete and permanent giving of self. Therefore, being well prepared for your marriage is of primary importance for the health of society and the future of humanity.

THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE

In the eyes of the Catholic Church, marriage between the baptized takes on an even greater beauty and importance because Christ elevated it to the dignity of a sacrament. Sacramental marriage is an icon of the bond between Christ and his Bride, the Church. This bond gives married people the grace to imitate Jesus' model of self-sacrificial spousal love.

To enter into such a lifelong union, one must be free to do so – psychologically, emotionally and physically. Mutual consent is at the heart of marriage. Both individuals must know themselves and each other well enough to make an exclusive commitment that they can keep in joy and in sorrow, in good times and in bad, until death. Marriage images God's love, which is faithful, fruitful, forgiving and forever. It is within the family, based on the Sacrament of Marriage that we aspire most closely to the life of the Trinity.

As a sacrament, Catholic marriage demands that we accept the challenge to be real.

- Not just a show – not the place to try to outdo a friend's or a relative's ceremony or flower arrangements;
- Not a celebration that lasts 45 minutes and then is over. It is the beginning of a new life and a new way of living;
- Not something that is done on your own but includes God and the entire believing community who celebrate with you and support you.



SOME IMPORTANT QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

WHO CAN BE MARRIED AT ST. JOSEPH PARISH?

Church law states that the normal place in which marriage should take place is the parish where either the bride or groom regularly worship. Consequently, St. Joseph Parish restricts weddings to parishioners who live within the parish boundaries and/or parishioners who are registered and who worship at St. Joseph on a weekly basis.

HOW SOON SHOULD THE PARISH BE CONTACTED?

The couple must contact the priest or deacon at least one year in advance of the proposed marriage date. Pre-nuptial investigation and the beginning of the marriage forms are filled out at the first interview with the couple. The date of the wedding may also be set provided the circumstances allow.

WHAT IF THERE WAS A PREVIOUS MARRIAGE?

If either the bride or groom has participated in a previous marriage, no date can be set until the previous union has been resolved in the eyes of the Church. Certainly the priest can help you negotiate your way through this. Here are the documents that are required to help that process:

If the former spouse has died:

- a death certificate is required.

If the former spouse is living:

- a copy of the divorce decree absolute; and
 - an official confirmation from the proper ecclesiastical court with regard to the dissolution of the marriage, or a declaration of Nullity; and
 - a copy of the previous marriage license.
-

WHAT DOCUMENTS ARE REQUIRED?

In addition to the above documents for a previous marriage, every Catholic being married must obtain a current certificate of Baptism, that is, **one that has been issued within the last 6 months**. The parish of Baptism must be contacted in due time. One simply asks for a new copy of Baptism for the purpose of marriage.

A non-Catholic party, if baptized in another denomination, needs to provide proof of Baptism. This need not be a current document, as the original will suffice (we will take a photocopy and return the original).

IS THE SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION REQUIRED BEFORE MARRIAGE?

No. Catholics usually will have completed the sacraments of Christian initiation (Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist) before marriage. When a Catholic has not been confirmed, the Church strongly recommends that Confirmation be celebrated before the marriage, whenever this can be reasonably accommodated.

Those who have not been confirmed certainly may be married. The lack of Confirmation is not an impediment for either the celebration or the scheduling of the marriage.

DOES THE CHURCH PROVIDE THE MARRIAGE LICENSE?

Only the couple can procure a marriage license. These licenses can be obtained at any city hall in the province of Ontario. In this province, a license is valid for only 90 days. As soon as the wedding license has been obtained, it should be brought to the parish office. There is nothing on the license that the couple should fill out. The Parish will prepare it for use on the wedding day.

IS PARTICIPATION IN A MARRIAGE COURSE REQUIRED BEFORE MARRIAGE?

Yes. Pre-marriage courses are mandatory. All couples anticipating marriage here at St. Joseph are required to complete a sanctioned course. Those entering into second marriage situations, or those who have been living together are required by the Archdiocese to complete a “Special Marriage Preparation Course”. Our Marriage course at St. Joseph parish is usually in the winter months. ***It is your responsibility to ensure that one is completed before the Wedding day.***

DOES THE WEDDING TAKE PLACE AT MASS?

Since non-Catholics are not permitted to receive Holy Communion, and marriage is meant to be a celebration of unity, it is more fitting that mixed marriages between a Catholic and a non-Catholic not take place at Mass. To mark the unity of the two, the celebration of marriage would normally take place within the context of the Liturgy of the Word, without the celebration of the Eucharist. For a good reason, the couple may wish to request a Mass, for example, because they both regularly attend Sunday Eucharist together even though one spouse is not Catholic. In such a case, however, the final decision belongs to the priest.

If both bride and groom are baptized Catholics, the Church provides for two possibilities: a wedding within Mass, or a wedding outside of Mass. In consultation with the couple, the priest will decide which option is more appropriate. His judgment will be based on a variety of factors including the number of priests available at the parish (each priest may offer the Holy Sacrifice only twice per day), and the composition of the congregation (e.g., many non-Catholics or non-practicing Catholics).

Addressing the frequently encountered situation that on certain occasions – such as weddings – in addition to practicing Catholics there may be others present who do not regularly attend Mass or are living in a situation which does not permit them to receive the sacraments, Pope Benedict XVI reminds us that it would be more appropriate to have a liturgical celebration without Mass if circumstances “make it impossible to ensure that the meaning of the Eucharist is duly appreciated” (Sacramentum Caritatis, 50).

In his annual speech to the judges and officials of the Roman Rota, the Church’s central appellate court, on January 22, 2011, Pope Benedict noted: “the right of Catholics to be married in the Church is not a subjective claim that pastors must fulfill through a merely formal recognition, independent of the effective content of the union. The right to marriage presupposes that the person can and intends to celebrate it truly, that is, in the truth of its essence as the Church teaches it. No one can claim the right to a nuptial ceremony.” Similarly, no one can demand that a priest celebrate the Eucharistic Sacrifice, when the required conditions for a real appreciation of Holy Mass are not demonstrably met.

WHERE AND WHEN DO WEDDINGS TAKE PLACE?

Roman Catholic Church weddings always take place in the parish church building. This underlines our belief that a wedding is fundamentally a religious event, one that concerns the entire parish community. It is not our tradition to celebrate weddings in school chapels, private homes, or public gardens. In certain cases, permission may be given for the wedding to take place in the church of another religious denomination.

At St. Joseph, we try very hard to celebrate only two weddings per day. Because of other scheduling issues, our Saturday times for weddings are 12:00 p.m. and 2:00 p.m.. Weddings are not allowed to be celebrated on Sundays. Other days of the week are certainly negotiable. Please note that we discourage weddings during the liturgical seasons of Advent and Lent.

CAN FAMILY AND/OR CULTURAL TRADITIONS BE INCORPORATED INTO THE CEREMONY?

Couples may wish to include gestures from a family/cultural heritage in their wedding. When these can be accommodated within the celebration they have a valid place. Sometimes, however these expressions are important only to a few people and are not clearly appreciated by the rest of the assembly. They must either be well explained or simplified. Purely secular gestures or music have no place in the wedding ceremony. Often, these other expressions are better included at the reception or the rehearsal party if one is held.

Much of what is popularly considered 'traditional' at weddings actually consists of social customs from another era that no longer correspond to the church's (or even a modern) understanding of marriage. For example, at one time people believed that it was 'bad luck' for the groom to see the bride before the ceremony began. The Catechism of the Catholic Church refers to such superstitions as a 'deviation of religious feeling' (#2110-2111).

The custom whereby the bride's father 'gives the bride away' to the groom at the head of the aisle reflects a time when marriages were arranged between the groom and the bride's father, and in some cases, the woman was seen as property to be given and received. Today, the church and society both emphasize marriage as a mutual decision by equal and free partners. Wedding customs that no longer reflect reality or faith are meaningless. Authentic wedding traditions 'hand down' the church's ageless faith in ways that respect the current social reality of marriage and the contemporary Christian understanding of marriage.

ARE OTHER PRIESTS OR MINISTERS WELCOME?

The presiding minister at a wedding is a priest or deacon of the parish staff. Parish policy does not invite others to celebrate the wedding, although an exception may be made for close relatives of the bride or groom.

Other clergy (school chaplains, classmates, family friends) as well as ministers from other denominations may be invited and offered an active role in the celebration. For example, priests may concelebrate; ministers may participate in readings and prayers.

WHAT COSTS ARE INVOLVED?

Although, there are no fees associated with the celebration of a wedding, couples should make a donation to the parish to help cover the costs of maintaining the Church facility. We suggest \$400 as an appropriate offering. There are separate fees associated with the parish musicians. These fees should be discussed with the musicians prior to the celebration.

Donations and musician fees should be brought to the Church on rehearsal day.

WHAT INPUT DO THE COUPLE HAVE IN THE WEDDING LITURGY?

Couples are encouraged and even expected to take an active role in the preparation of the wedding; in fact, they are ministers of the sacrament to one another. However, each wedding is also a celebration of the faith of the Church, so their input takes place within certain guidelines. For example, couples make a choice of readings from those provided in the marriage ritual.

Couples are invited to plan what takes place within the context of the ritual. They do not write their own ceremony. Music, for example, will reflect the context of God's love for us rather than expressing only secular sentiment.

The planning of the wedding liturgy, should involve both the priest or deacon and the couple from the beginning so that the religious dimension can be clearly and easily expressed.



THE WEDDING LITURGY

INTRODUCTION

Couples planning to be married find themselves involved in a whirlwind of organization for a pivotal event in their lives. The planning of the wedding liturgy is, however, not simply one task among many others, it is the central event of the days and even months of preparation.

Couples are indeed the ministers of marriage to one another. Couples do not, however, preside over or 'own' the celebration. The wedding day does not belong to the 'bride'. It is not her day. It is the Church's day. A wedding is first of all an event in the life of the Church, a celebration of God's love for his people manifested in the love of this couple. It is the entire parish community that is guest at the wedding liturgy, even if it is not actually present. The Church owns the sacrament of marriage, and thus, must be guided by proper liturgical principles.

Soap operas and movies have generated a perversion of the intent and direction of marriage. The 'staging mentality' of the show of the wedding has given rise to extraordinary demands, expectations, and visions of that wondrous day. Magazines and trade shows have precipitated the rise of an industry bent on unnecessarily increasing the cost and novelty of the event. Most is spurious, superfluous and superficial, and has no role in the Church's sacramental life. Hired wedding planners may help you with the affairs outside the liturgy, but they are unnecessary for the church aspect of the wedding. There is no place for them in the rehearsal or preparations of the liturgy itself.

LIVE SIMPLY THAT OTHERS MAY SIMPLY LIVE

In the awaking of a global consciousness, some consideration must also be given to Social Justice. As representatives of Christ, we must be aware of the moral obligation and ethics of what we do. There must be a sincere attempt to serve God in all the preparations. Going overboard on these events cannot be justified when so many in our world go without food, water, clothing, housing or medicines. These concerns must be part of the equation when you look at booking limousines, buses, dresses, flowers, menus, favours, and the like. Your wedding is a great opportunity to witness to your concern for the poor and to give glory to God.

Each wedding liturgy touches the entire Church. Accordingly, since they are moments in the Church's ritual life, certain aspects of the marriage liturgy are "given". Just as, for example, the location contracted for the wedding banquet will have certain clearly defined regulations, so too, the Church reminds couples that the liturgical celebration is not entirely open to their personal design. The paragraphs set out here present the basics for all couples planning and celebrating their wedding liturgy.



PART I - BEFORE THE LITURGY BEGINS

The moments immediately before the wedding liturgy, during which people and ministers gather and prepare, should be a period of gracious hospitality. Those who come for the celebration, especially those from other places or traditions should find a ready home in the assembly. This welcome takes place at the entrance of the church and may involve the bride and groom, their parents, attendants, and even members of the local parish community. The role of the ushers is not simply to get people seated, but to welcome them and help them find a suitable place.

Guests should be seated from the front of the church (keeping some places for family and attendants) and without consideration of “bride’s guests” or “groom’s guests” so that one side is not out-numbered.

A number of attendants (those in addition to the official witnesses) should not be overwhelming. They should be seated in such a way that they do not inhibit movement or the view of the altar area. Attendants are first of all members of the congregation.

RECEPTION OF THE COUPLE:

The ritual books set out two forms for the reception and greeting of the couple.

A. RECEPTION AT THE DOOR OF THE CHURCH

The priest or deacon, accompanied by the ministers, goes to the entrance of the church and receives the couple. The priest (deacon) and ministers lead the couple (who may be accompanied by their parents, some attendants and witnesses) to their place.

B. RECEPTION AT A PLACE WITHIN THE CHURCH

The priest or deacon, accompanied by the ministers, goes to his place and receives the couple as they (more informally) take their seats. The forms provided in the rite, present the entrance procession as an action that involves both the bride and groom - together. It does not envisage an entrance (or series of entrances) by parents, attendants and bride with the groom waiting at the front of the Church.

When a truly pastoral decision permits some form of “traditional” entrance, it is best carried out as an action before the liturgical celebration itself begins. There is no specific liturgical form provided for this. The bride and groom and their attendants take their places first, followed by an opening hymn.

PART II - LITURGY OF THE WORD

It is important to choose readers who can properly exercise this ministry, preferably those who already serve as readers in their local churches. (Sometimes, experienced readers from the parish proclaim the readings.) Readers need a chance to practice beforehand. This is often done at the rehearsal. They should also be aware of when they are to approach the ambo (lectern).

There are two readings before the Gospel, one from the Old Testament and one from the New Testament. **Readings from sources outside the Sacred Scriptures are not permitted.** Between these two readings, a Psalm, in response to the first reading is sung.

PART III - IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS TO ENSURE A SACRED LITURGY

WEDDING PARTY:

A small wedding party is highly recommended. Flower girls and ring bearers must be five years old or older. It is not fair to put a young child in the marriage situation and expect them to remain focused for forty five minutes.

WEDDING ATTIRE GUIDELINES:

Appropriate dress for church is based upon what is considered "modest" and "reverent" dress for visiting a Catholic church or holy place. Wedding parties, their families, guests and visitors are reminded that it is a place of worship and prayer and request that you respect the holiness of God's house.

Accordingly, while in the church, shoulders are to be covered; dresses are to be at knee length; no 'beachwear' shorts, flip flops, etc. should be worn. Respecting this, demonstrates your love and respect for the Lord.

OTHER:

Texting, the use of mobile phones, or any other mobile device, during the ceremony is also prohibited.

UNITY CANDLE:

The most important symbol of marriage is the exchange of vows. This exchange is made visible in the secondary symbol, the exchange of rings. Anything that intrudes on these time honoured rites does a disservice to them and the liturgy. As touching as a unity candle may be, it is best reserved for the reception hall.

PHOTOGRAPHY:

A wedding is indeed a memorable event. However, the marriage ceremony itself is a sacred event which takes place in the house of God. In keeping with the dignity of a church wedding, and with reverence of God's house, the following guidelines are to be observed.

As is the policy in our Parish, the photographer may get a picture of your entrance, the exchange of vows and the signing of the registrar. At all other times they must be at the back of the Church. **They are not to enter the Sanctuary.**

The videographer must have the video camera on a tripod and remain in one place. With the advances in technology, extra lights are not necessary or allowed.

Both the photographer & videographer must meet with the presider 15 minutes before the service.

FLOWERS:

Flowers for the wedding are the sole responsibility of the bridal party. Simple arrangements are preferred -- no more than two sprays are permitted. Extra candles are not permitted. Rugs, bridal carpets or bridal arches are not permitted. Pew decorations are permitted.

'CONFETTI':

The use of flower petals, rice, confetti, bird seed, or any other material is not allowed in the church or on the church property.

MUSIC:

Music is an important part of the wedding celebration. It should reflect the sacredness of the celebration. For this reason, secular songs or show tunes are not considered suitable in a wedding ceremony. (i.e. Here comes the Bride, Follow Me, The Rose etc.) Again, because marriage is the action of the church, music selections must comply with good liturgical principles. This means that priority is given to the acclamations, psalms and other parts of the Mass, the hymns and instrumentals.

We are proud here of our music ministry and they provide ample variety to appeal to different tastes. Our musicians have worked hard to develop a sense of appropriate liturgical music. It is entirely the responsibility of the couple to contact the parish musician and make arrangements for their fees. Names of these musicians are available from the parish office.

OUTSIDE MUSICIANS:

Those wishing to hire musicians from elsewhere, will need to seek prior approval from the Pastor regarding choice of musicians and music. As well, a fee of \$250.00 will also be required for use of the church's equipment which monies will go towards our Music Ministry for related supplies (hymn books, sheet music, etc).



A FINAL WORD

Of all the myriad of details over the weeks and months of your preparation, none are as important as reflecting upon your vocation into which you are entering. The wedding itself is only one day, your marriage is for life. Your “I do” is not just to each other, but an ‘Amen” to Christ’s plan of salvation. Your marriage is an integral part of that plan. The spiritual component of your married life is paramount. It will provide you with the tools to encounter the world ahead of you. God is the source of what you are undertaking, and God will be the sustenance. When all is said and done, little else matters except the preparation the two of you do together to encounter Christ in one another. Take time to nurture your own depth and spirit.

We at St. Joseph hope that this booklet helps you keep your focus on what is essential, and to not sweat the inessentials. The sacrament can be the most fulfilling and rewarding journey. It is the closest we come to experiencing the creative love of God. The trick is to keep your life centered on the truly important. Your Christian community of St. Joseph offers you our prayers and support for a fruitful and blessed married life. Our community celebrates your decision to respond to Christ’s call by offering your marriage to the service of the Church. Your courage and generosity in accepting the call to marriage will be blessed many times over by our loving God.



APPENDIX A

MARRIAGE INTRODUCTORY MEETING

Following your initial meeting with the priest it is important that:

1. A date for the wedding is decided.
2. A Baptismal Certificate for the bride and groom is provided to the Church office.
 - Catholics must obtain a newly issued Baptismal Certificate from the church of Baptism.
 - Certificates from other Christian denominations need not be newly issued.
3. A marriage preparation course be attended– our parish course is in the winter months and will be advertised in the bulletin.
4. Once the marriage course is completed an appointment is made with the priest to complete the paper work and prepare your liturgy.
5. A marriage license must be obtained from City Hall within ninety days of the wedding – deliver it to the parish office – office staff will complete the forms and process them.
6. A wedding rehearsal is booked.

As you prepare for your wedding remember:

1. Keep your wedding celebration simple!
2. Ask yourselves two questions:
 - a. On your 50th wedding anniversary how do you want your children to describe you as a married couple?
 - b. On your wedding day, as you are expressing your vows, what do you want to be thinking about?

These two questions should become the focus of your preparation to enter into Holy Matrimony.

3. Everyone in the wedding party must be over the age of 5.
4. For the ceremony, the bride processes in with either both her parents or the groom. The groom processes in with either both his parents or the bride.
5. Please keep flowers to a minimum. Our Church is beautiful and does not require many decorations – they can in fact serve as a distraction from the focus of the marriage vows and exchange of rings.
6. In your preparations remember the poor, the sick and the needy. As part of your preparations visit an elderly person or a person with a disability on a monthly basis – share your love.
7. Mark off the six weeks prior to your wedding. Identify all the things you know you will have to do in that time (rehearsal, fittings, prepare table lists for the reception, etc.). Choose one night a week for yourself as an individual and one night a week as couple to just enjoy each other apart from the wedding preparations.
8. Enjoy!

APPENDIX B

PHOTOGRAPHY AT WEDDINGS

Your wedding is a special day for you and the Church. The decision to celebrate your wedding in the context of your parish community is a powerful statement of faith. Your wedding vows will be stated in the context of the Church's liturgy and as such need to reflect the sacred mysteries.

We at St. Joseph's are committed to making the Marriage celebration the fullest expression of the sacrament. In this light we have some basic regulations for the photographers. In making these regulations we have consulted with newly married couples and couples who have been married for many years. One of the observations made by most couples is that they rarely if ever watch their wedding video or look at their wedding pictures. It was also noted that very rarely do people display pictures from the Church part of the wedding in their home.

REGULATIONS REGARDING WEDDING PHOTOGRAPHY:

- The Photographer should be at the Church no later than fifteen minutes before the wedding in order to get instructions from the Church representative – **we do not wait for photographers!**
- Photographers should never interact with the couple or people once the celebration begins: i.e. do not stop the wedding procession for pictures or interfere with the signing of the register.
- When taking videos, extra lights are not permitted and the camera must be on a tripod.
- Pictures may be taken:
 - During the procession of the bridal party: after the procession the photographer must move out of the way – over by the organ or to the very back of the Church
 - Of the readers – these are taken over by the organ.
 - Exchange of vows / rings: these are taken from the centre aisles three pews back – after the exchange of rings the photographer must move to the back of the Church.
 - Once the exchange of rings is complete – no more pictures until the signing of the register!
- The Mass is a very sacred celebration and needs our full attention – If the photographer is not going to participate in the celebration of the Mass, by kneeling, responding, singing etc. he/she should move out of the Church (into the lobby) and wait for the signing of the Register which happens after Communion.
- Pictures are not to be taken during the Our Father, the Sign of Peace or Communion.

Photographers who do not follow these instructions will be asked to leave the church.

PARISH INFORMATION

**ST. JOSEPH PARISH
5440 DURIE ROAD
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CONTACT

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PRIESTS & DEACONS

Pastor: Father Paul Dobson
Associate Pastor: Father Neiman D'Souza
Deacon: Lionel Gomes
Deacon: George Jurenas

SUNDAY MASSES

Saturday: 5:30 PM
Sunday: 8:00 AM, 9:30 AM, 11:00 AM,
12:30 PM & 6:00 PM

WEEKDAY MASSES

Monday to Friday: 8:30 AM
First Friday: 7:30 PM
Saturday: 9:00 AM

TEMPORARY OFFICE HOURS

Wednesdays: 10 am - 12 noon
Fridays: 12 noon - 4 pm
Saturday: Closed due to Covid
Sunday: Closed due to Covid

***During the Months of July & August, the Parish Office is closed on Fridays.**